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## SELECTED POEMS

*of*

ROBERT BURNS

EDITED BY CHARLES W. KENT



Silver, Burdett & Company



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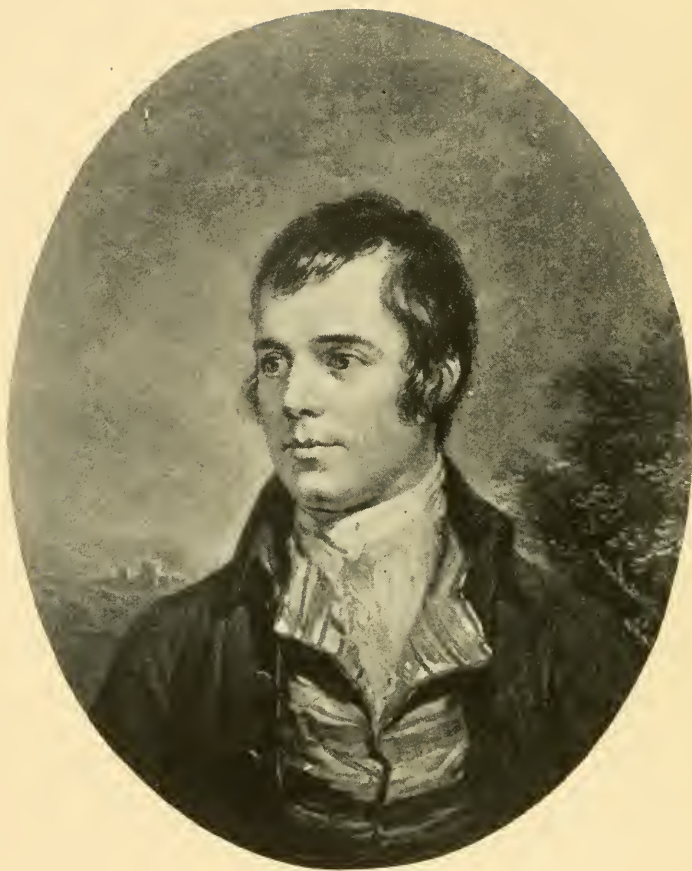
SILVER, BURDETT & COMPANY, Publishers.

NEW YORK.

BOSTON.

CHICAGO.





ROBERT BURNS.



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SELECTED POEMS

OF

ROBERT BURNS

*EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES*

BY

CHARLES W. KENT, M.A., PH.D.

LINDEN KENT MEMORIAL SCHOOL OF ENGLISH LITERATURE  
UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA



SILVER, BURDETT AND COMPANY

NEW YORK

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To

MY BROTHER, HENRY T. KENT

OF THE ST. LOUIS BAR

TO WHOSE COMPANIONSHIP AND CONVERSATION

I OWED AN ADDITIONAL ZEST IN MY

FIRST PILGRIMAGE TO

THE LAND OF BURNS



## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
PREFATORY NOTE . . . . .	7
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9
CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE . . . . .	21
POEMS	
Handsome Nell . . . . .	25
On Cessnock Banks . . . . .	26
A Prayer . . . . .	28
Mary Morrison . . . . .	29
A Prayer in the Prospect of Death . . . . .	30
Epistle to Davie . . . . .	31
To a Mouse . . . . .	36
Man was Made to Mourn . . . . .	38
The Cotter's Saturday Night . . . . .	42
To a Mountain Daisy . . . . .	51
Epistle to a Young Friend . . . . .	53
A Bard's Epitaph . . . . .	56
Flow Gently, Sweet Afton . . . . .	57
The Banks of the Devon . . . . .	58
I Love my Jean . . . . .	59
Auld Lang Syne . . . . .	60

	PAGE
On a Wounded Hare . . . . .	61
Willie Brew'd a Peck o' Maut . . . . .	62
To Mary in Heaven . . . . .	63
John Anderson, my Jo . . . . .	64
Tam o' Shanter . . . . .	65
Ae Fond Kiss . . . . .	74
Duncan Gray . . . . .	75
Bruce to his Men at Bannockburn . . . . .	77
Somebody . . . . .	78
A Red, Red Rose . . . . .	79
For A' That and A' That . . . . .	79
O, Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast . . . . .	82
GLOSSARY . . . . .	83

## PREFATORY NOTE.

THE life of Burns should be known as a whole, the poems in detail. This little book aspires to tell the general reader all he need know of the poet's life, but to tempt him to a fuller first-hand knowledge of the poet's work.

As far as possible the origin and setting of each poem have been given that it may thus be identified with his life and become its own interpreter. Apart from a glossary, few notes have been added except by way of analysis or critical comment. The charm of a song often vanishes when you would find its cause, as the voice of a bird is lost forever when you dissect its throat. Better that something now and then should be obscure than that the critic's coldness should chill the life-blood of a pulsating lyric and leave it a frozen crystal.

The purpose and plan of the book is clear, and should the reader desire more of notes and explanations he may find them in the large editions by Currie, Cunningham, Wallace, etc., or in the tributes to Burns by Carlyle, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Campbell, Scott, Emerson, Lockhart, and others.

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NOTE. — I desire to take this public way of thanking my assistant, Mr. Carol M. Newman, B.A., for his cheerful and intelligent aid.

C. W. K.





## INTRODUCTION.

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ROBERT BURNS was born on Monday, January 25, 1759, in the humble cot still standing near Alloway Kirk on the road that leads from Ayr to the Brig o' Doon. The 'auld clay biggin' was built by Burns's father, William Burness, or Burnes, a true type of that sturdy Scotch peasantry which set great store by education and were deeply imbued with a personal and reverential sense of religion. His wife, Agnes Brown, whose devotion to her children was repaid by their unswerving love and filial protection, was a woman of strong intellect and character, and, though she had less education than her husband, she fully matched him in piety.

The humble home was not unhappy. The father was busily employed in the daily tasks on his farm, and the mother was fully occupied with the unceasing cares of her house and dairy and the more absorbing cares of her increasing family. Robert, somewhat stubborn, and peculiarly pious, began the cultivation of his memory and other mental faculties at the little school at Alloway Miln, but continued his education to better advantage after his father had moved to Mount Oliphant. It is true that their stay here of eleven years was "one long sore battle ending in defeat," but the boy nevertheless was learning much. His grave and thoughtful demeanor gave no promise of the rol-

licking and reckless mirth that was to mark him later. More wonderful still, the most musical of Britain's songsters had in these boyhood days an untunable voice and an ear so dull as with difficulty to distinguish one melody from another. But he was fond of good reading, and his taste must have been carefully cultivated, for the first compositions in which he took pleasure were Addison's "Vision of Mirza" and his hymn, "How are thy servants blest, O Lord!"

This literary preference may suggest that the "idiot piety" which possessed him led him early to reflections upon death and the fortunes of this world. His love for English writings, however, was not to be compared with his patriotic devotion, partly hereditary and partly cultivated, to the traditions and songs of Auld Scotland. To his mother, whose memory was charged with ballad and story, he owed much; for even more poetic material he was indebted to an ignorant, superstitious, and garrulous old woman who regaled him with tales of night and mystery, of dragon-guarded towers and bewitched kirkyards, of ghosts, fairies, kelpies, and warlocks. While his imagination was growing strong in its constant exercise of weaving living pictures out of this fancifully chaotic material, his body was weakened by the overstraining labor to which the poor, unkind soil of the farm subjected him with the rest. From those days date the weakness of his heart and his incipient despondency. Yet there was much pleasure, too, for Ayr was an open market for so social a disposition as his. His bright intelligence won him friends, not only among those whom his cheery nature and bright

chat could beguile, but also among those who could befriend him with books and counsel. The harvest days, too, were often joyous, for in the whitened field worked man and maiden, paired. It was his partner, Handsome Nell, that first inspired him to sing. "When the tones of her voice thrilled his heartstrings like an Æolian harp," the lad found his voice, too, and uttered that prelude to the unbroken series of love songs to which in large part he owed his fame.

Times were hard; the farm was poor; the boys worked faithfully, but to little purpose, while the father, sadly broken by his long struggle, was now harassed by misfortune. Another move was necessary, and soon the family was settled at Lochlea, in the parish of Tarbolton, best known to us by its lassies whom Robert Burns has glorified. The lad of eighteen had now learned to fit words to melody and had thus reunited music and poetry. It would be interesting to conjecture whether with conscious aim he was impelled to join to these two their other erring sister, dancing. An easier explanation of his dancing lessons is his own. He was now almost a man, a beau among the peasant belles, who may have coyly snickered now and then at his clouterly appearance and his unpolished deportment. He must needs give his manners a "brush." Innocent love-making was now his chief recreation in the midst of farm duties, but in the idle summer-time he went to Kirkoswald to study surveying. Alas! his male associates there were not as innocent as the "Tarbolton lasses." His improved manners were the veneering of morals less improved.

Escape from bad companionship, on the one hand, and from pointless trifling on the other, seemed promised in his serious desire to marry Ellison Begbie, whom, years afterward, when he passed in review all the fine ladies he had met, he declared to have been best suited to form an agreeable companion through life. She rejected him. The confidant of half the love stories of Tarbolton now had a love story of his own, that he felt little like telling, for he was chagrined, sadly disappointed, and dejected. The sorely disheartened poet was afflicted with hypochondria, which for the time cast a gloom over all he wrote. In such a mood, little fitted to meet and resist insidious evil, he went to Irvine to learn flax-dressing; but, in addition, learned from a sailor lad, a hapless son of misfortune, easy lessons in vice. Burns was of a household of deep-rooted and consecrated virtues. These virtues, once sacredly enshrined in his own heart, were now irreverently handled. The hesitancy of prudent fear was soon overcome by the violence of passions against which his weak will was no safeguard. By those whom he admired he was easily swayed to imitation, and by those who admired him, readily encouraged to excesses.

The flax-shop venture was a failure. The deceit of his partner was followed almost immediately by the burning of the shop, just as Burns and his friends were giving a welcoming carousal to the new year. Dissipation and disaster, his present devils, followed him into his ensuing attack of constitutional melancholy. His brother Gilbert, younger in years, but by his steadiness, good sense, and sobriety the exact complement of his aimless, "hair-brained," and reck-

less brother, leased for both of them the Mossgiel farm. This was done in anticipation of the impending death of their father, which would of necessity cause a crisis in the family affairs.

Around the death-bed of the father gathered the family. The patriarch's thoughts were not of himself, but of his children's future. For that of one of them he expressed soulful anxiety. Robert asked the self-accusing question, "Is it I?" but knew the answer before the assenting nod. The watchful sire had long since noted the brilliancy and promise of his eldest boy, but he had seen as well the innate strength of his passionate nature and his want of the balancing strength of a resolute will. The beginnings of a tragedy of life were in these qualities, particularly when taken in connection with the tears that welled up from his sensitive soul, which his father's fears had moved to remorse. The sting of a delicately sensitive conscience is sharp in a soul subject to remorseful and melancholy despondency.

Burying their father in Alloway Kirkyard and pausing in Lochlea only long enough to save from the ruins of his shattered fortunes the paltry sum that would meagerly stock their farm, the sons were soon settled at Mossgiel with their widowed mother and their brothers and sisters.

It was in the next years when Burns, by no particular fault of his own, was failing as a farmer, that he discovered his frailty as a man and locally established his fame as a poet. His reputation as a poet could be safely rested on a period of six months (November 1785 to April 1786) during which he wrote among many other poems: "To a

Mouse," "Halloween," "Man Was Made to Mourn," "The Cotter's Saturday Night," "The Jolly Beggars," "The Twa Dogs," "The Unco Guid," and "To a Mountain Daisy."

He fully realized now his destiny as a poet and made no secret of his desire for fame. But he became notorious before he became famous. He was married to Jean Armour in the "fatal spring" of 1786, but the marriage was irregular. Through the dark storm of church opprobrium that thickened around the poet's head flashed the lightning ire of Jean's outraged father. Despondency bordering on madness led first to revolt and then to a resolution to leave Scotland for Jamaica. To put this resolution into effect he must first put his poems into print, that from their limited sale among his friends he might raise the necessary sum. Toward the end of July the volume appeared. At once the fame of this "maker of rhymes" filled his own circle and echoed in Edinburgh. The call to this Athens of the West was now stronger than the summons to Jamaica. He answered it in November. But he was a sadder if not a wiser man now, for into his life had entered another experience that cast its shadow forward on his path with darkness deepening on every anniversary of its occurrence. On the rebound from the deep dejection into which the whole unhappy affair with Jean, including her seeming faithlessness, had thrown him, his heart was enthralled by Mary Campbell. They met at the brook near the river Ayr and, standing upon opposite sides, first washed their hands as for some solemn rite, and then with their hands upon a Bible held above the pure flowing water, plighted

eternal troth. There were solemn verses concerning the sacredness of vows inscribed in this Bible and underneath them their united names were written. The scene was impressive despite its artificially dramatic character. Mary's faithful heart turned toward her lover; in October she set out to visit him, was stricken with fever on the way and died at Greenock. Burns was condemned in the depths of his soul where his faithlessness was known, and in that dark corner Remorse now took her abiding seat. Silence sealed the simple story, for Burns was sensitive, tender, and kind, but through many a song its sad memories found an outlet.

In Edinburgh, after a day or so of quiet observation, he became the observed of all observers. He was greeted by the learned as a genius, hailed as a wonder by the sensational, but loved by the lowly, whose pleasures led him to their taverns and their convivial living. His manly, frank bearing in the midst of the great, his self-poise in society for which he had no training but that of manly independence, increased his popularity. Burns was not deceived. He had watched the ebb following the inflowing tide. His purpose in coming to Edinburgh was primarily to bring out another edition of his poems. This appeared in April, 1787, but Creech, his publisher, was slow in settling, and the poet was thus forced into idle and aimless waiting. In the summer and autumn he gratified his love of scenery by journeyings through the Highlands and the Borderlands, but "embittering remorse was scaring his fancy at the gloomy forebodings of death." His journeyings brought him to Ayrshire, where bonny Jean

awaited him as of yore, but where the servile compliance of father Armour, who was now flattered by so famous a son-in-law, literally drove the poet to studying Milton's "Satan." At Mossgiel he was encircled by the proud love of his own kin, into whose plans he entered. By attentions and presents he admitted them all into a full interest in his reviving fortunes. He returned to Edinburgh, where he was confined to his room for several months, by an accident due to an upset carriage, but even after his recovery the settlement for the poems was still delayed.

The second winter in Edinburgh had not been a great social success. The plummet of Burns's good sense had soon found the shallow bottom of this transient personal popularity. He left the city in the spring. Five hundred pounds was the proceeds of his book. He had used up £120 in idleness and travelling, £180 he gave to his brother Gilbert for the support of the family, £200 was left with which to found a home. With sad and embittered feelings he turned away from the shallow though not insincere appreciation of the capital to the home circle and his faithful Jean. He leased Ellisland—"a poet's, not a farmer's choice"—and in a short while had gathered around him his own. He was quieter and more calm. His old dream of a home of his own seemed realized, but his money was nearly gone. His was the problem of the "superlatively damned," as he described it, "to make one guinea do the business of three." The rally of the man was but temporary. Forebodings of failure compelled him to seek other and more remunerative duties. By the favor of his friends—whose friendship, however,



went strangely "agley"—he was made an exciseman. Week by week he rode his circuit of two hundred miles, while the solitary hours of his lonely rides by crooning songs and warming the cockles of his heart at every inn where his vivacious and sparkling conversation made him a welcome visitor. His leniency, his liveliness, and his loyalty to Scotland won him friends everywhere, who found open the door to his cottage, situated too conveniently, about six miles from Dumfries and on the highway from Glasgow to England. That house was poor indeed, then, that could not furnish the cheering glass, and there was much show of conviviality in Burns's home. The cheerfulness was superficial. To the hopelessness of his neglected farming was now added the "groaning under the miseries of a diseased nervous system." His October depressions and despondency turned his soul, it is true, to "Mary in Heaven," but they turned his restless and unsatisfied mind to the delusive consolations of the Globe Tavern in Dumfries.

Poetry was still his chosen, nay, rather God-given, vocation; the uncongenial duties of the exciseman but a necessary avocation until he could attain the "summit of his wishes," "a life of literary leisure with a decent competency." There was little hope now that he would ever obtain his desire, for the periods of rest that fell between the regular and faithful discharge of his duties, were largely given to congenial but unprofitable companions. Partly, perhaps, to be more convenient to them, but more because some change was imperative since £300 had already been sunk in the Ellisland venture, he determined to move to Dumfries. The remaining years were feverish

and fatal. Poor failing Robbie was losing his reputation, so dear to a Scotchman, and losing too, his own approval of himself. He knew "self-contempt bitterer to drink than death."

From his faithful wife he would turn to pointless and compromising love making with "Clarinda." Often he resigned the homage due to lyric kingship, which he held by divine right, to be cajoled with the adulations paid by lax and lazy subjects to their prince of good fellows. Restless in soul and body, he made himself a part of the revolution of his day and dabbled in politics, not more because of his love of the people, than because of his hate of the self-satisfied aristocracy. The poet was tender and true in his poesy, the solace of his sinking fortunes, but the man in his moods was often satirical and petulant. "I shun now the gay crowds I used to love," he writes; but it was because he could not find there the sympathy and comfort he craved. Humiliation and self-reproach anon clogged the upward flight of his song, but only for a time. Then song followed song. On New Year's day of 1795 he gave to the world the best expression in verse of the individual worth of manhood, of which he might under other circumstances have made so much more.

In October he was ill, but in January of 1796 far better. By exposure he was made sick again, but he did not lose hope until spring found him still ailing. In the early summer his health continued to decline, but he was self-possessed and chiefly concerned about his posthumous fame. Sea bathing was tried with merely transient effect, and on July 18 he was brought home to die. He lingered

several days, frequently delirious, and passed away on July 21, in the middle of the summer, which was almost the midsummer of his life according to the time allotted by the Psalmist.

The large crowd of mighty and menial that gathered around the Town Hall where his remains lay, or lined the streets and fell in behind the lengthening procession that followed his body to the grave in St. Michael's Churchyard was but emblematic of the almost unceasing procession since that day to the spot where Robert Burns lies in the bosom of his beloved country.

The evil and the good that war continually in man, fought many a fierce battle in this honest bosom. When good prevailed a victorious song burst upon the air, and old Scotland's melodies were graced with words more beautiful than of yore; when evil had its way there might have been the laughter of the crowd, the unrestrained mirth of his own self-abandonment in joyous verse, but there often followed sadness, sorrow, and remorse, which found, too, their expression at times in his poetry.

To-day, amid the thousands who throng his birthplace or his grave, there are those whose tuneful ears are enraptured with his music; those whose aspiring souls are caught in the upward flight of his soaring genius; those whose human hearts beat with deep commiseration for his pathetic sufferings; those who share his patriotism or glory in his brotherhood with all created things; but there are those, too, who know mainly of his follies and his foibles. Some hail him again as the minister of mirth, others acclaim him a priest in the inner sanctuary of song.



## CHRONOLOGICAL OUTLINE OF BURNS'S LIFE.

1759. January 25, Monday. Born in the "auld clay biggin," about two miles from Ayr, on the road that leads by Alloway Kirk to the Brig o' Doon.
1764. At school at Alloway Miln.
1766. Whitsuntide. His father moves to Mount Oliphant, about two miles from the Brig o' Doon.
1774. "Handsome Nell," his first poem, composed.
1777. His father moves to Lochlea, in Tarbolton Parish. Robert goes to a dancing school to give his manners a brush.
1778. Spent summer in Kirkoswald studying surveying; falls in with bad company.
1781. Desires to marry Ellison Begbie; suit not encouraged; poet sadly disappointed; afflicted with a nervous affection akin to hypochondria; goes to Irvine to learn flax-dressing; forms a friendship with a bright, but wild, sailor lad; there begins Burns's descent into vice.
- 1782-83. New Year. Flax shop burned; cheated by his partner.
1783. He and Gilbert lease Mossgiel, near Mauchline.
1784. In February William Burns, the father, died; in March Robert and Gilbert convey their mother and five brothers and sisters to Mossgiel.
1785. Whole year marked by his courtship of Jean Armour; his time not given to conviviality; writes "The Cotter's Saturday Night" and many other poems.
1786. "The fatal spring." Marriage with Jean Armour; indignation of her father drives Burns to desperation; determines to go to Jamaica; publishes at Kilmarnock a volume of his poems to procure money for his passage to Jamaica;

becomes widely and well known and is invited to Edinburgh; consents, and reaches the city on November 28.

The Mary Campbell episode; meeting at the brook on Sunday, May 14; the solemn oaths of fidelity; in October, Mary reaches Greenock on her way to see Burns, is stricken with fever, and dies; the gloom of this October returned each fall.

1787. After a winter of triumph in Edinburgh he sees through the press in April the second edition of his poems; spends the summer and autumn in travel in the Highlands and Border; visits Mossgiel; returns to Edinburgh in September and again in October for the winter. December 7, confined to his room by an accident; attachment to Mrs. M'Lehose ("Clarinda").
1788. March 24. Recovered from his accident, he leaves Edinburgh, a saddened and embittered man; leases Ellisland on the Nith, about six miles above Dumfries; takes Jean to Ellisland in December.
1789. Appointed exciseman and given his own district; his depression in October; the outcome was the poem "To Mary in Heaven."
1790. Hopelessness of farming; increasing depression and poverty; frequent visits to Dumfries and the tavern; writes "Tam o' Shanter" in one day in October.
1791. Poetry his vocation; excise office his avocation; conviviality his growing habit; in August sells his crops at Ellisland; in November or December sells his farming implements, etc., and removes to Dumfries.
1792. Present at all convivial gatherings; dabbling in politics; falling under the censure of the Excise Board; the tender poet is now an ill-tempered satirist; his consolation is found solely in song making.
1794. His "Arrêt de Mort": "I am afraid I am about to suffer for the follies of my youth. The doctors threaten me with flying gout."
1795. His New Year's gift to the world was "A Man's a Man for A' That"; in February, snow bound in Ecclefechan; in March, the death of his daughter; in October, ill.
1796. January. Ill, but not without hope; April, hope vanishing;

in June, still declining, but self-possessed and concerned about the future of his poetry; July 4 goes to Brow for sea-bathing; returns on July 18 so weak that he can hardly stand; is frequently delirious during the next days, and dies July 21; on July 25 the remains were removed to the Town Hall; on July 26 they were buried in St. Michael's Churchyard in Dumfries.

## SUMMARY.

- 1759-1766. Boyhood at Ayr; laborious, but happy.
- 1766-1777. Youth at Mount Oliphant; his educational period.
- 1777-1784. Lochlea period; innocent love making.
- 1784-1786. Mossgiel period; harmful love making.
- 1786-1788. Edinburgh period; triumph, conviviality, dejection.
- 1788-1791. Ellisland period; his rally, his faults, his failure.
- 1791-1796. Dumfries period; his downward course.





## POEMS.



### HANDSOME NELL.

TUNE— *I am a Man Unmarried.*

This, Burns's first poem, was written in the summer of 1774. It was addressed to his partner in the harvest field.

OH once I lov'd a bonnie lass,  
Ay, and I love her still ;  
And whilst that honor warms my breast,  
I'll love my handsome Nell.

As bonnie lasses I hae seen,  
And mony full as braw ;  
But for a modest, gracefu' mien,  
The like I never saw.

well-dressed  
handsome.

A bonnie lass, I will confess,  
Is pleasant to the ee,  
But without some better qualities,  
She's no the lass for me.

But Nelly's looks are blythe and sweet,  
And, what is best of a',  
Her reputation is complete,  
And fair without a flaw.

She dresses aye sae clean and neat,  
Both decent and genteel,  
And then there's something in her gait,  
Gars ony dress lock weel.

makes.

A gaudy dress and gentle air  
 May slightly touch the heart;  
 But it's innocence and modesty  
 That polishes the dart.

'Tis this in Nelly pleases me,  
 'Tis this enchants my soul;  
 For absolutely in my breast  
 She reigns without control.

A simple, enthusiastic love poem. "I composed it in a wild enthusiasm of passion, and to this hour I never recollect it but my heart melts, my blood sallies, at the recollection." — BURNS'S *Autobiography*.

### ON CESSNOCK BANKS.

TUNE — *If he be a Butcher neat and trim.*

Written in 1781 to Ellison Begbie, the daughter of a small farmer in Galston Parish (see *Story of his Life*, p. 10). She was now employed by a family on the banks of the Cessnock.

ON Cessnock banks there lives a lass,  
 Could I describe her shape and mien,  
 well-favored. The graces of her weel-faur'd face,  
 And the glancin' of her sparklin' een!

She's fresher than the morning dawn  
 When rising Phœbus first is seen,  
 When dew-drops twinkle o'er the lawn;  
 And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

She's stately like yon youthful ash,  
 slopes. That grows the cowslip braes between,  
 And shoots its head above each bush;  
 And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

She's spotless as the flow'ring thorn,  
With flow'rs so white, and leaves so green,  
When purest in the dewy morn ;  
And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

Her looks are like the sportive lamb  
When flow'ry May adorns the scene,  
That wantons round its bleating dam ;  
And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

Her hair is like the curling mist  
That shades the mountain-side at e'en,  
When flow'r-reviving rains are past ;  
And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

Her forehead's like the show'ry bow,  
When shining sunbeams intervene,  
And gild the distant mountain's brow ;  
And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

Her voice is like the evening thrush  
That sings in Cessnock banks unseen,  
While his mate sits nestling in the bush ;  
And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

Her lips are like the cherries ripe  
That sunny walls from Boreas screen —  
They tempt the taste and charm the sight ;  
And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

Her teeth are like a flock of sheep,  
With fleeces newly washen clean,  
That slowly mount the rising steep ;  
And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

Her breath is like the fragrant breeze  
 That gently stirs the blossom'd bean,  
 When Phœbus sinks beneath the seas;  
 And she's twa glancin' sparklin' een.

But it's not her air, her form, her face,  
 Tho' matching beauty's fabled queen,  
 But the mind that shines in ev'ry grace,  
 And chiefly in her sparklin' een.

This is a "song of similes," as the poet called it. With some attractive lines, it is, nevertheless, a somewhat forced and artificial analysis of a mistress intellectually appreciated rather than devotedly loved.

## A PRAYER.

### UNDER THE PRESSURE OF VIOLENT ANGUISH.

Written in 1781 under circumstances described on page 14.

OH thou great Being! what Thou art  
 Surpasses me to know:  
 Yet sure I am that known to Thee  
 Are all Thy works below.

Thy creature here before Thee stands,  
 All wretched and distrest;  
 Yet sure those ills that wring my soul  
 Obey Thy high behest.

Sure Thou, Almighty, canst not act  
 From cruelty or wrath!  
 Oh, free my weary eyes from tears,  
 Or close them fast in death!

But if I must afflicted be,  
 To suit some wise design;  
 Then man my soul with firm resolves  
 To bear, and not repine!

The poem recognizes the unknowable, but all-knowing, God, who brings suffering upon man, but not through cruelty or wrath. If he cannot escape suffering by freedom from it, or by death, he would have a soul to bear it without repining.

## MARY MORRISON.

TUNE — *Bide ye yet.*

This poem is the outcome of his love making in 1783 and 1784. Nothing is known of any real Mary Morrison.

O MARY, at thy window be.  
 It is the wish'd, the trusty'd hour!  
 Those smiles and glances let me see,  
 That make the miser's treasure poor.  
 How blythely wad I bide the stoure,                   dust.  
 A weary slave frae sun to sun,  
 Could I the rich reward secure,  
 The lovely Mary Morrison.

Yestreen when to the trembling string  
 The dance gaed thro' the lighted ha',  
 To thee my fancy took its wing,  
 I sat, but neither heard nor saw.  
 Though this was fair, and that was braw,  
 And yon the toast of a' the town,  
 I sigh'd, and said amang them a'  
 "Ye are na Mary Morrison."

O Mary, canst thou wreck his peace,  
 Wha for thy sake wad gladly die?  
 Or canst thou break that heart of his,  
 Whase only faut is loving thee?  
 If love for love thou wilt na gie,  
 At least be pity to me shown;  
 A thought ungentle canna be  
 The thought o' Mary Morrison.

This is one of many beautiful love-songs showing Burns's power of translating into words a passion, whether transient or lasting, spontaneous or created.

#### A PRAYER IN THE PROSPECT OF DEATH.

Written in the summer of 1784, and designated in his Common-place Book as "a prayer when fainting fits and other alarming symptoms of a pleurisy, or some other dangerous disorder which still threatens me, first put nature on the alarm."

OH, Thou unknown Almighty Cause  
 Of all my hope and fear!  
 In whose dread presence, ere an hour,  
 Perhaps I must appear!

If I have wandered in those paths  
 Of life I ought to shun,  
 As something loudly in my breast  
 Remonstrates I have done;

Thou knowest that Thou hast formed me  
 With passions wild and strong;  
 And listening to their witching voice  
 Has often led me wrong.

When human weakness has come short,  
 Or frailty stept aside,  
 Do Thou, All-good! — for such Thou art, —  
 In shades of darkness hide.

When with intention I have erred,  
 No other plea I have,  
 But, Thou art good; and goodness still  
 Delighteth to forgive.

Burns here gives with no particular poetic felicity an interesting estimate of himself. In the presence of death his conscience reproves him that he had wandered into forbidden paths, but his extenuation is that his innate "passions wild and strong" often led him into wrong. He beseeches God to hide his sins of frailty and to forgive his sins of intent.

## EPISTLE TO DAVIE.

## A BROTHER POET, LOVER, PLOUGHMAN, AND FIDDLER.

"It was, I think, in summer, 1784, when, in the interval of harder labor, he and I were weeding in the garden (kail-yard), that he repeated to me the principal part of this epistle." — GILBERT BURNS.

It seems to have been completed in its present form in January, 1785. The Davie addressed is David Sillar, a member of the Bachelors' Club at Tarbolton. He lived until 1830.

WHILE winds frae aff Ben Lomond blaw,  
 And bar the doors with driving snaw,  
 And hing us owre the ingle, hang.  
 I set me down to pass the time,  
 And spin a verse or twa o' rhyme,  
 In hamely westlin jingle.  
 While frosty winds blaw in the drift  
 Ben to the chimla lug, into, (chim-  
ney—ear)  
fireside.  
 I grudge a wee the great folk's gift,  
 That live sa bien and snug: comfortable.

mind.                    I tent less, and want less  
                               Their roomy fire-side ;  
                               But hanker and canker  
                               To see their cursed pride.

                              It's hardly in a body's power  
                               To keep, at times, frae being sour,  
                               To see how things are shar'd ;  
 fellows.                How best o' chiefls are whiles in want,  
 fools, boast.        While coofs on countless thousands rant,  
 use.                      And ken na how to wair't ;  
 trouble.                But Davie, lad, ne'er fash your head,  
 wealth.                 Tho' we hae little gear,  
                               We're fit to win our daily bread,  
 sound.                 As lang's we're hale and fier :  
 ask.                     " Mair spier na, no fear na "  
 fig.                      Auld age ne're mind a feg,  
                               The last o't, the warst o't,  
                               Is only but to beg.

                              To lie in kilns and barns at e'en,  
                               When banes are craz'd, and bluid is thin,  
                               Is, doubtless, great distress !  
                               Yet then content could make us blest ;  
                               Ev'n then, sometimes we'd snatch a taste  
                               Of truest happiness.  
                               The honest heart that's free frae a'  
                               Intended fraud or guile,  
 ball.                    However fortune kick the ba',  
                               Has aye some cause to smile :  
                               And mind still, you'll find still,  
                               A comfort this nae sma' ;  
                               Na mair then, we'll care then,  
                               Nae farther we can fa'.



What though, like commoners of air,  
 We wander out we know not where,  
     But either house or hal' ?  
 Yet nature's charms, the hills and woods,  
 The sweeping vales, and foaming floods,  
     Are free alike to all.  
 In days when daisies deck the ground,  
     And blackbirds whistle clear,  
 With honest joy our hearts will bound  
     To see the coming year :  
     On braes when we please, then,  
         We'll sit and sowth a tune ;  
     Syne rhyme till't, we'll time till't,  
         And sing't when we hae dune.

without.

try over by  
whistling.  
afterward.

It's no in titles nor in rank ;  
 It's no in wealth like Lon'on bank,  
     To purchase peace and rest ;  
 It's no in makin' muckle mair ;  
 It's no in books ; it's no in lear,  
     To mak us truly blest ; —  
 If happiness hae not her seat  
     And centre in the breast,  
 We may be wise, or rich, or great,  
     But never can be blest :  
     Nae treasures nor pleasures  
         Could make us happy lang ;  
     The heart aye's the part aye  
         That makes us right or wrang.

much more.  
learning.

Think ye, that sic as you and I,  
 Wha drudge and drive through wet and dry,  
     Wi' never-ceasing toil ;  
 Think ye, are we less blest than they,

notice.

Wha scarcely tent us in their way,  
 As hardly worth their while?  
 Alas! how aft, in haughty mood,  
 God's creature's they oppress!  
 Or else neglecting a' that's guid,  
 They riot in excess!  
 Baith careless and fearless  
 Of either heaven or hell!  
 Esteeming and deeming  
 It's a' an idle tale!

Then let us cheerfu' acquiesce;  
 Nor make our scanty pleasures less  
 By pining at our state;  
 And, even should misfortunes come,  
 I, here wha sit, hae met wi' some,  
 An's thankfu' for them yet,  
 They gie the wit of age to youth;  
 They let us ken oursel;  
 They make us see the naked truth,  
 The real guid and ill.  
 Though losses and crosses  
 Be lessons right severe,  
 There's wit there, ye'll get there,  
 Ye'll find nae other where.

mark!

But tent me, Davie, ace o' hearts!  
 (To say aught less wad wrang the cartes,  
 And flatt'ry I detest)  
 This life has joys for you and I;  
 And joys that riches ne'er could buy:  
 And joys the very best.  
 There's a' the pleasures o' the heart,  
 The lover and the frien';  
 Ye hae your Meg,<sup>1</sup> your dearest part,

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Orr — a nurse at Mrs. Stewart's.

And I my darling Jean!<sup>1</sup>

It warms me, it charms me,  
 To mention but her name:  
 It heats me, it beets me,  
 And sets me a' on flame!

adds fuel.

Oh, all ye pow'rs who rule above!  
 Oh, Thou, whose very self art love!  
 Thou know'st my words sincere!  
 The life-blood streaming thro my heart,  
 Or my more dear immōrtal part,  
 Is not more fondly dear!  
 When heart-corroding care and grief  
 Deprive my soul of rest,  
 Her dear idea brings relief  
 And solace to my breast,  
 Thou Being, all-seeing,  
 Oh, hear my fervent pray'r!  
 Still take her, and make her  
 Thy most peculiar care!

image.

All hail, ye tender feelings dear!  
 The smile of love, the friendly tear,  
 The sympathetic glow!  
 Long since, this world's thorny ways  
 Had number'd out my weary days,  
 Had it not been for you!  
 Fate still has blest me with a friend,  
 In every care and ill;  
 And oft a more endearing band,  
 A tie more tender still.

<sup>1</sup> Jean Armour. (See "Six Mauchline Belles.")

It lightens, it brightens  
 The tenebrific<sup>1</sup> scene,  
 To meet with, and greet with  
 My Davie or my Jean!

Oh, how that name inspires my style!  
 thronging. The words come skelpin', rank and file,  
           Amaist before I ken!  
 The ready measure rins as fine  
 As Phœbus and the famous Nine  
 staring.       Were glowrin' owre my pen.  
 spavined. My spaviet Pegasus will limp,  
 heated.       Till ance he's fairly het;  
 hobble, halt, And then he'll hilch, and stilt, and jimp,  
 a good pace. And rin an unco fit:  
           But lest then, the beast then  
           Should rue this hasty ride,  
 wipe.       I'll light now, and dight now,  
           His sweaty, wizen'd hide.

Note in this poem the poet's fine arraignment of the wealthy class, "the great folk"; the elements of content; the charms of nature; the thoughts on beggary.

### TO A MOUSE,

ON TURNING HER UP IN HER NEST WITH THE PLOUGH,  
 NOVEMBER, 1785.

This poem depicts an actual occurrence at Mossgiel. Burns was holding the plow, and John Blane, one of the farm hands, was driving. A mouse starts from the furrow and across the field, with John Blane, "wi' murderin pattle" (a small, wooden paddle for cleaning the plow-

<sup>1</sup> How did Burns know this word? Carlyle uses it.

share), in hot pursuit. Burns calls him back with the question, "What hurt the mouse had done him, that he should wish to kill it?" That night Burns repeated to Blane the following lines :—

WEE, sleeakit, cowerin, timorous beastie,	sleek.
O, what a panic's in thy breastie!	
Thou need na start awa sae hasty,	
Wi' bickerin brattle!	hasty clatter.
I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,	
Wi' murderin pattle!	

I'm truly sorry man's dominion  
Has broken Nature's social union,  
An' justifies that ill opinion  
    Which makes thee startle  
At me, thy poor earth-born companion,  
    An' fellow-mortal!

I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;	sometimes.
What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!	
A daimen-icker in a thrave	occasional ear of corn;
'S a sma' request:	24 sheaves.
I'll get a blessin wi' the lave,	rest.
And never miss't!	

Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!	
Its silly wa's the win's are strewin!	
An' naething, now, to big a new one,	build.
O' foggage green!	forage.
An' bleak December's winds ensuin,	
Baith snell an' keen!	sharp.

Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,  
An' weary winter comin fast,  
An' cozie here, beneath the blast,  
    Thou thought to dwell,  
Till, crash! the cruel coulter past  
    Out through thy cell.

without  
abiding-  
place.  
suffer.  
drizzle.  
hoar-frost.  
not thyself  
alone.

awry ;  
wrong.

That wee bit heap o' leaves and stibble  
Has cost thee mony a weary nibble ;  
Now thou's turned out, for a' thy trouble,  
But house nor hald,  
To thole the winter's sleety dribble,  
An' cranreuch cauld !

But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,  
In proving foresight may be in vain :  
The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men  
Gang aft a-gley,  
An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain,  
For promised joy.

Still thou art blest, compared wi' me !  
The present only toucheth thee :  
But, och ! I backward cast my e'e  
On prospects drear !  
An' forward, though I canna see,  
I guess an' fear !

Burns, without malice, brings misfortune upon an earth-born companion guilty of no unpardonable sin. The innocent must suffer, yet his fate is not solitary. The mouse suffers only now, while the drear prospects of the past and the forebodings for the future overwhelm the poet.

This is one of the series of touching poems in which Burns shows his sympathy with all creatures.

## MAN WAS MADE TO MOURN.

### A DIRGE.

Gilbert Burns says that his brother used frequently to remark that he could not conceive a more mortifying picture of human life than a man vainly seeking work. This theme is obvious in this poem, but the occasion of its production seems to have been his reflections upon the misery of old Kemp, whose pretty daughter Kate was one of the peas-

ant belles. The poet, in one of his visits to Kate, found the quarrelsome, decrepit, diseased old man almost beside himself because Kate had gone after the lost cow and must herself have got lost, since she was so long gone. Burns and the young miller of Barskimming went to look for her. Burns was taciturn, and afterwards, with an apology for his behavior, read the young miller this poem. 1785.

WHEN chill November's surly blast  
 Made fields and forests bare,  
 One ev'ning, as I wandered forth  
 Along the banks of Ayr, -  
 I spied a man whose aged step  
 Seem'd weary, worn with care;  
 His face was furrow'd o'er with years,  
 And hoary was his hair.

“Young stranger, whither wand'rest thou?”  
 Began the rev'rend sage:

“Does thirst of wealth thy step constrain,  
 Or youthful pleasure's rage?  
 Or, haply, prest with cares and woes,  
 Too soon thou hast began  
 To wander forth, with me, to mourn  
 The miseries of man.

“The sun that overhangs yon moors,  
 Outspreading far and wide,  
 Where hundreds labour to support  
 A haughty lordling's pride:  
 I've seen you weary winter-sun  
 Twice forty times return,  
 And ev'ry time has added proofs  
 That man was made to mourn.

“O man, while in thy early years,  
 How prodigal of time!  
 Misspending all thy precious hours,  
 Thy glorious youthful prime!

Alternate follies take the sway ;  
Licentious passions burn ;  
Which tenfold force gives nature's law  
That man was made to mourn.

“ Look not alone on youthful prime,  
Or manhood's active might ;  
Man then is useful to his kind,  
Supported is his right ;  
But see him on the edge of life,  
With cares and sorrows worn ;  
Then age and want — oh ! ill-match'd pair ! —  
Show man was made to mourn.

“ A few seem favourites of fate,  
In Pleasure's lap carest ;  
Yet, think not all the rich and great  
Are likewise truly blest.  
But, oh ! what crowds in every land,  
All wretched and forlorn !  
Thro' weary life this lesson learn —  
That man was made to mourn.

“ Many and sharp the num'rous ills  
Inwoven with our frame !  
More pointed still we make ourselves  
Regret, remorse, and shame ;  
And man, whose heaven-erected face  
The smiles of love adorn,  
Man's inhumanity to man  
Makes countless thousands mourn !

“ See yonder poor, o'erlabour'd wight,  
So abject, mean, and vile,  
Who begs a brother of the earth  
To give him leave to toil ;



And see his lordly fellow-worm  
The poor petition spurn,  
Unmindful, though a weeping wife  
And helpless offspring mourn.

“ If I’m design’d yon lordling’s slave —  
By Nature’s law designed —  
Why was an independent wish  
E’er planted in my mind ?  
If not, why am I subject to  
His cruelty or scorn ?  
Or why has man the will and power  
To make his fellow mourn ?

“ Yet, let not this too much, my son,  
Disturb thy youthful breast ;  
This partial view of human-kind  
Is surely not the last !  
The poor, oppressed, honest man  
Had never, sure, been born,  
Had there not been some recompense  
To comfort those that mourn !

“ Oh Death ! the poor man’s dearest friend —  
The kindest and the best !  
Welcome the hour, my aged limbs  
Are laid with thee at rest !  
The great, the wealthy, fear thy blow,  
From pomp and pleasure torn !  
But, oh ! a blest relief to those  
That weary-laden mourn !”

## THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

Written probably in November, 1785, it owed its origin to the vivid picture Burns carried with him of his patriarchal father leading the family devotions and to the peculiarly venerable phrase he used, "Let us worship God." The central thought of the poem then is autobiographical, but the details of the picture are imaginary.

"Let not ambition mock their useful toil,  
 Their homely joys and destiny obscure ;  
 Nor grandeur hear, with a disdainful smile,  
 The short and simple annals of the poor."

— GRAY.

## I.

My loved, my honour'd, much respected friend,  
 No mercenary bard his homage pays :  
 With honest pride I scorn each selfish end :  
 My dearest meed, a friend's esteem and  
 praise :  
 To you I sing, in simple Scottish lays,  
 The lowly train in life's sequester'd scene ;  
 The native feelings strong, the guileless ways ;  
 What Aiken in a cottage would have been ;  
 Ah ! tho' his worth unknown, far happier there,  
 I ween.

course of  
 events.

## II.

November chill blows loud wi' angry sough ;  
 The short'ning winter-day is near a close ;  
 The miry beasts retreating frae the plough ;  
 The black'ning trains o' craws to their repose :  
 The toil-worn cotter frae his labour goes,  
 This night his weekly moil is at an end,  
 Collects his spades, his mattocks, and his hoes,  
 Hoping the morn in ease and rest to spend,  
 And weary, o'er the moor, his course does hame-  
 ward bend.

labor.

## III.

At length his lonely cot appears in view,  
 Beneath the shelter of an aged tree ;  
 Th' expectant wee things toddlin, stacher thro' stagger.  
 To meet their dad, wi' flichterin' noise and fluttering.  
 glee.  
 His wee bit ingle, blinkin' bonnily, shining.  
 His clean hearth-stane, his thriftie wifie's  
 smile,  
 The lispin infant prattling on his knee,  
 Does a' his weary kiaugh and care beguile, anxiety.  
 And makes him quite forget his labour and his  
 toil.

## IV.

Belyve, the elder bairns come drapping in, by and by.  
 At service out amang the farmers roun',  
 Some ca' the pleugh, some herd, some tentie rin drive.  
 A cannie errand to a neibor town ; attentively.  
 Their eldest hope, their Jenny, woman grown,  
 In youthfu' bloom, love sparklin' in her e'e,  
 Comes hame, perhaps, to show a bra' new gown,  
 Or deposit her sair-won penny fee,  
 To help her parents dear, if they in hardship be.

## V.

With joy unfeign'd brothers and sisters meet,  
 And each for other's welfare kindly spiers ; inquires.  
 The social hours, swift-wing'd, unnotic'd fleet ;  
 Each tells the uncos that he sees or hears ; news.  
 The parents, partial, eye their hopeful years ;  
 Anticipation forward points the view,  
 The mother, wi' her needle and her shears,  
 Gars auld claes look amaist as weel's the new ;  
 The father mixes a' wi' admonition due.

## VI.

Their master's and their mistress's command,  
 The younkers a' are warnèd to obey;  
 diligent. And mind their labours wi' an eydent hand,  
 dally. And ne'er, tho' out o' sight, to jauk or play;  
 "And oh! be sure to fear the Lord alway!  
 And mind your duty, duly, morn and night!  
 go. Lest in temptation's path ye gang astray,  
 Implore His counsel and assisting might:  
 They never sought in vain that sought the Lord  
 aright!"

## VII.

But, hark! a rap comes gently to the door,  
 Jenny wha kens the meaning o' the same,  
 Tells how a neibor lad cam o'er the moor,  
 To do some errands, and convoy her hame.  
 The wily mother sees the conscious flame  
 Sparkle in Jenny's e'e, and flush her cheek,  
 Wi' heart-struck anxious care, inquires his name,  
 half. While Jenny hafflins is afraid to speak;  
 Weel pleased the mother hears it's nae wild  
 worthless rake.

## VIII.

in. Wi' kindly welcome, Jenny brings him ben;  
 A strappin youth; he tak's the mother's e'e;  
 Blithe Jenny sees the visit's no ill ta'en;  
 tells. The father cracks of horses, pleughs, and kye.  
 The youngster's artless heart o'erflows wi' joy,  
 bashful, hesitating. But blate and lathefu' scarce can weel behave;  
 The mother, wi' a woman's wiles, can spy

What makes the youth sae bashfu' an' sae  
 grave;  
 Weel pleas'd to think her bairn's respected like  
 the lave.

others

## IX.

Oh happy love!— where love like this is found!  
 Oh heart-felt raptures! bliss beyond compare!  
 I've pacèd much this weary, mortal round,  
 And sage experience bids me this declare,—  
 “If Heaven a draught of heavenly pleasure  
 spare,  
 One cordial in this melancholy vale,  
 'Tis when a youthful, loving, modest pair  
 In other's arms breathe out the tender tale,  
 Beneath the milk-white thorn that scents the  
 ev'ning gale.”

## X.

Is there, in human form, that bears a heart,  
 A wretch! a villain! lost to love and truth!—  
 That can, with studied, sly, ensnaring art  
 Betray sweet Jenny's unsuspecting youth?  
 Curse on his perjur'd arts! dissembling smooth!  
 Are honour, virtue, conscience, all exil'd?  
 Is there no pity, no relenting ruth,  
 Points to the parents fondling o'er their child?  
 Then paints the ruin'd maid, and their distraction wild?

## XI.

But now the supper crowns their simple board,  
 The halesome parritch, chief of Scotia's food;  
 The soupe their only hawkie does afford,  
 That 'yont the hallan snugly chows her cood:

cow.  
 wall.

well saved,  
 cheese,  
 strong.  
 flax bloom.

The dame brings forth, in complimental mood,  
 To grace the lad, her weel-hain'd kebbuck, fell,  
 And aft he's prest, and aft he ca's it guid;  
 The frugal wifie, garrulous, will tell,  
 How 'twas a towmond auld, sin' lint was i' the  
 bell.

## XII.

hall-bible.  
 gray tem-  
 ples.  
 chooses.

The cheerfu' supper done, wi' serious face,  
 They, round the ingle, form a circle wide;  
 The sire, turns o'er, with patriarchal grace,  
 The big ha'-bible, ance his father's pride;  
 His bonnet rev'rently is laid aside,  
 His lyart haffets wearing thin and bare;  
 Those strains that once did sweet in Zion glide,  
 He wales a portion with judicious care;  
 And "Let us worship GOD!" he says, with sol-  
 emn air.

## XIII.

feeds.

They chant their artless notes in simple guise;  
 They tune their hearts, by far the noblest aim:  
 Perhaps "Dundee's" wild-warbling measures rise,  
 Or plaintive "Martyrs," worthy of the name,  
 Or noble "Elgin" beets the heaven-ward flame,  
 The sweetest far of Scotia's holy lays:  
 Compar'd with these, Italian trills are tame;  
 The tickl'd ear no heart-felt raptures raise;  
 Nae unison hae they with our Creator's praise.

## XIV.

The priest-like father reads the sacred page,  
 How Abram was the friend of God on high;  
 Or, Moses bade eternal warfare wage  
 With Amalek's ungracious progeny;

Or how the royal bard did groaning lie  
 Beneath the stroke of Heaven's avenging ire;  
 Or Job's pathetic plaint and wailing cry;  
 Or rapt Isaiah's wild, seraphic fire;  
 Or other holy seers that tune the sacred lyre.

## XV.

Perhaps the Christian volume is the theme,  
 How guiltless blood for guilty man was shed;  
 How He who bore in Heaven the second name,  
 Had not on earth whereon to lay His head:  
 How His first followers and servants sped,  
 The precepts sage they wrote to many a land:  
 How he, who lone in Patmos banished,  
 Saw in the sun a mighty angel stand;  
 And heard great Bab'lon's doom pronounced by  
 Heaven's command.

## XVI.

Then kneeling down, to HEAVEN'S ETERNAL KING,  
 The saint,<sup>1</sup> the father, and the husband prays:  
 Hope "springs exulting on triumphant wing;"<sup>2</sup>  
 That thus they all shall meet in future days;  
 There ever bask in uncreated rays,  
 No more to sigh, or shed the bitter tear,  
 Together hymning their Creator's praise,  
 In such society, yet still more dear,  
 While circling time moves round in an eternal  
 sphere.

<sup>1</sup> Note the epitaph on William Burns.

<sup>2</sup> From Pope's "Windsor Forest."

## XVII.

Compared with this, how poor Religion's pride,  
 In all the pomp of method and of art,  
 When men display to congregations wide,  
 Devotion's ev'ry grace except the heart!  
 The power, incens'd, the pageant will desert,  
 The pompous strain, the sacerdotal stole;  
 But haply, in some cottage far apart,  
 May hear well pleas'd the language of the soul,  
 And in His book of life the inmates poor enroll.

## XVIII.

Then homeward all take off their several way;  
 The youngling cottagers retire to rest:  
 The parent pair their secret homage pay,  
 And proffer up to Heaven the warm request,  
 That He, who stills the raven's clam'rous nest,  
 And decks the lily fair in flow'ry pride,  
 Would, in the way His wisdom sees the best,  
 For them and for their little ones provide;  
 But, chiefly, in their hearts with grace divine  
 preside.

## XIX.

From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur  
 springs,  
 That makes her loved at home, rever'd abroad:  
 Princes and lords are but the breath of kings,  
 "An honest man's the noblest work of God;"<sup>1</sup>  
 certainly. And *certainly*, in fair virtue's heav'nly road,  
 The cottage leaves the palace far behind.  
 What is a lordling's pomp? a cumbrous load,  
 Disguising oft the wretch of human kind,  
 Studied in arts of hell, in wickedness refin'd!

<sup>1</sup> From Pope's "Essay on Man."



## XX.

O Scotia! my dear, my native soil!

For whom my warmest wish to Heaven is sent!  
Long may thy hardy sons of rustic toil

Be blest with health, and peace, and sweet  
content!

And, O! may Heaven their simple lives prevent

From luxury's contagion weak and vile!

Then, howe'er crowns and coronets be rent,

A virtuous populace may rise the while,  
And stand a wall of fire around their much-lov'd  
isle.

## XXI.

O Thou who pour'd the patriotic tide

That streamed through Wallace's undaunted  
heart,

Who dar'd to nobly stem tyrannic pride,

Or nobly die, the second glorious part, —

The patriot's God peculiarly Thou art,

His friend, inspirer, guardian, and reward!

O never, never, Scotia's realm desert;

But still the patriot and the patriot's bard

In bright succession raise, her ornament and  
guard!

## ANALYSIS OF THE COTTER'S SATURDAY NIGHT.

- I. Dedication to Robert Aiken of Ayr, to whom Burns gave the credit of having "read him into fame," so well did he interpret the poet.
- II. *Picture First.* The toil-worn Cotter returning home at the end of a bleak November Saturday.
- III. *Picture Second.* The welcome by bairns and thrifty wife in his lonely cot.
- IV. *Picture Third.* The home-gathering of the children from their weekly labors.

- V. *Picture Fourth.* The social group telling of the week's happenings.
- VI. The father's admonition to (1) obedience; (2) diligence; (3) fidelity; (4) fear of the Lord; (5) duty as a means of avoiding temptation; (6) prayer.
- VII. *Picture Fifth.* The arrival of Jenny's lover.
- VIII. *Picture Sixth.* The embarrassed lover kindly received.
- IX. Author's rhapsody of true love.
- X. Author's denunciation of false love.
- XI. *Picture Seventh.* The supper.
- XII. *Picture Eighth.* Preparation for devotions opened by the father's "Let us worship God."
- XIII. Devotion continued; song from the heart.
- XIV. Devotion continued; lesson from the Old Testament.  
     For example of (1) Abram, friend of God.  
                           (2) Moses against Amalek.  
                           (3) David under God's ire.  
                           (4) Job's plaint.  
                           (5) Isaiah's seraphic fire.  
                           (6) Other prophets.
- XV. Devotion continued. Perhaps the lesson is from the New Testament.  
     For example (1) Crucifixion of Christ. } Gospels.  
                   (2) Christ's poverty.        }  
                   (3) Acts of the Apostles.  
                   (4) Epistles.  
                   (5) Revelation.
- XVI. Devotion continued. The saint, father, and husband prays.
- XVII. Author contrasts this rich worship with the pomp of poor Religion's pride.
- XVIII. *Picture Ninth.* Separation, with parents' closet prayer.
- XIX. Author finds in such scenes the sources of Scotia's greatness, and affirms the cot's supremacy in virtue over the palace.
- XX. Apostrophe to Scotia and a prayer for the blessings of health, peace, and sweet content and freedom from luxury's contagion.
- XXI. Prayer to God not to desert Scotia but to preserve her patriotism.

This beautiful idyl presents a most perfect poetical picture of the sturdy, religious, yeoman life of Scotland.

## TO A MOUNTAIN DAISY.

ON TURNING ONE DOWN WITH THE PLOUGH IN APRIL,  
1786.

This poem, like the poem "To a Mouse," was composed at Moss-giel, and is the outcome of a simple and seemingly unpoetic occurrence.

dust.           WEE, modest, crimson-tipped flower,  
                  Thou's met me in an evil hour;  
                  For I maun crush amang the stoure  
                                  Thy slender stem:  
                  To spare thee now is past my power,  
                                  Thou bonnie gem.

wet.           Alas! it's no thy neibor sweet,  
                  The bonnie lark, companion meet,  
                  Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet,  
                                  Wi' speckled breast,  
                  When upward-springing, blithe, to greet  
                                  The purpling east!

                  Cauld blew the bitter-biting north  
                  Upon thy early, humble birth;  
                  Yet cheerfully thou glinted forth  
                                  Amid the storm,  
                  Scarce reared above the parent earth  
                                  Thy tender form.

walls.           The flaunting flowers our gardens yield,  
shelter.        High sheltering woods and wa's maun shield,  
                  But thou beneath the random bield  
                                  O' clod, or stane,  
dry.            Adorns the histie stibble field  
                                  Unseen, alane.

There in thy scanty mantle clad,  
 Thy snawie bosom sunward spread,  
 Thou lifts thy unassuming head  
     In humble guise ;  
 But now the share up-tears thy bed,  
     And low thou lies.

Such is the fate of artless maid,  
 Sweet floweret of the rural shade !  
 By love's simplicity betrayed,  
     And guileless trust,  
 Till she, like thee, all soiled, is laid  
     Low i' the dust.

Such is the fate of simple bard,  
 On life's rough ocean luckless starred !  
 Unskillful he to note the card  
     Of prudent lore,  
 Till billows rage, and gales blow hard,  
     And whelm him o'er !

Such fate to suffering worth is given,  
 Who long with wants and woes has striven,  
 By human pride or cunning driven  
     To misery's brink,  
 Till, wrenched of every stay but Heaven,  
     He, ruined, sink !

Even thou who mourn'st the daisy's fate,  
 That fate is thine — no distant date ;  
 Stern Ruin's ploughshare drives, elate,  
     Full on thy bloom,  
 Till crushed beneath the furrow's weight  
     Shall be thy doom !

And destiny crushes this untended, unseen flower of humble but hardy growth. With this fate he compares that of the deceived maiden, the simple bard, the worthy poor, and himself doomed to ruin in the bloom of his life.

## EPISTLE TO A YOUNG FRIEND.

A letter of counsel written to Andrew Aiken, the son of that Robert Aiken to whom he dedicated "The Cotter's Saturday Night." This letter bears date of May, 1786.

I LANG hae thought, my youthfu' friend,  
 A something to have sent you,  
 Though it should serve nae other end  
 Than just a kind memento ;  
 But how the subject-theme may gang,  
 Let time and chance determine ;  
 Perhaps it may turn out a sang,  
 Perhaps turn out a sermon.

Ye'll try the world fu' soon, my lad,  
 And, Andrew dear, believe me,  
 strange. Ye'll find mankind an unco squad,  
 And muckle they may grieve ye :  
 For care and trouble set your thought,  
 Ev'n when your end's attained ;  
 And a' your views may come to nought,  
 Where ev'ry nerve is strained.

I'll no say men are villains a' :  
 The real, harden'd wicked,  
 Wha hae nae check but human law,  
 Are to a few restricked :  
 very. But, och ! mankind are unco weak,  
 And little to be trusted ;  
 If self the wavering balance shake,  
 It's rarely right adjusted !

Yet they wha fa' in fortune's strife,  
 Their fate we should nae censure,  
 For still th' important end of life,  
 They equally may answer ;

A man may hae an honest heart,  
 Tho' poortith hourly stare him ;      **poverty.**  
 A man may tak a neibor's part,  
 Yet hae no cash to spare him.

Aye free, aff han, your story tell,  
 When wi' a bosom crony ;  
 But still keep something to yoursel  
 Ye scarcely tell to ony.  
 Conceal yoursel as weel's ye can  
 Frae critical dissection ;  
 But keek through ev'ry other man      **look.**  
 Wi' sharpen'd, sly inspection.

The sacred lowe o' weel-plac'd love,      **flame.**  
 Luxuriantly indulge it ;  
 But never tempt th' illicit rove,  
 Tho' naething should divulge it.  
 I waive the quantum o' the sin,  
 The hazard of concealing ;  
 But, och ! it hardens a' within,  
 And petrifies the feeling !

To catch dame Fortune's golden smile  
 Assiduous wait upon her ;  
 And gather gear by ev'ry wile      **wealth.**  
 That's justified by honour ;  
 Not for to hide it in a hedge,  
 Nor for a train-attendant,  
 But for the glorious privilege  
 Of being independent.

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip  
 To haud the wretch in order ;      **keep.**  
 But where ye feel your honour grip,  
 Let that aye be your border :

Its slightest touches, instant pause,  
 Debar a' side pretences ;  
 And resolutely keep its laws,  
 Uncaring consequences.

The great Creator to revere  
 Must sure become the creature,  
 But still the preaching cant forbear,  
 And e'en the rigid feature :  
 Yet ne'er with wits profane to range,  
 Be complaisance extended ;  
 An Atheist laugh's a poor exchange  
 For Deity offended !

When ranting round in pleasure's ring,  
 Religion may be blinded ;  
 Or if she gie a random sting,  
 It may be little minded ;  
 But when on life we're tempest driv'n,  
 A conscience but a canker,  
 A correspondence fix'd wi' Heav'n  
 Is sure a noble anchor !

Adieu! dear, amiable youth  
 Your heart can ne'er be wanting!  
 May prudence, fortitude, and truth  
 Erect your brow undaunting!  
 In ploughman phrase, "God send you speed,"  
 Still daily to grow wiser:  
 And may you better reck the rede  
 Than ever did th' adviser!

mind the  
 advice.

This poem gives us a fair conception of the poet's own philosophy of life.

## A BARD'S EPITAPH.

In lieu of "The Lament," "Despondency," "To Ruin," etc., written, as this, in the spring of 1786, this epitaph, which solemnly sums up his own failings, is inserted.

Is there a whim-inspired fool,	
Owre fast for thought, owre hot for rule,	
Owre blate to seek, owre proud to snool,	bashful,
Let him draw near ;	succumb.
And owre this grassy heap sing dool,	lament.
And drap a tear.	

Is there a bard of rustic song,  
 Who, noteless, steals the crowds among,  
 That weekly this area throng,  
     Oh, pass not by !  
 But, with a frater-feeling strong,  
     Here, heave a sigh.

Is there a man whose judgment clear  
 Can others teach the course to steer,  
 Yet runs, himself, life's mad career,  
     Wild as the wave ;  
 Here pause — and, through the starting tear,  
     Survey this grave.

The poor inhabitant below,  
 Was quick to learn, and wise to know  
 And keenly felt the friendly glow,  
     And softer flame ;  
 But thoughtless follies laid him low,  
     And stain'd his name !

Reader, attend — whether thy soul  
 Soar fancy's flights beyond the pole,



Or darkling grubs this earthly hole,  
 In low pursuit;  
 Know, prudent, cautious self-control  
 Is wisdom's root.

Burns's description of himself runs thus: A whim-inspired fool, too bashful to seek and too proud to succumb, I am a bard of rustic song, with judgment clear to teach others, but wild in my own mad career. I am quick, discerning, friendly, and passionate, but my course is stained with thoughtless follies, because I have ever lacked wise self-control.

## FLOW GENTLY, SWEET AFTON.

TUNE — *The Yellow Haired Laddie.*

This poem refers, most probably, not to Miss Stewart of Afton Lodge, but to Burns's "Highland Mary" Campbell, with whom he had fallen in love soon after he had been treated harshly by Jean's father and unfeelingly, as he thought, by Jean herself. Mary Campbell did not live on the Afton, but was at Coilsfield. This choice of a stream must be attributed to the euphony of the name. The poem was written in the spring of 1786. (See *Story of his Life*, p. 14.)

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,  
 Flow gently, I'll sing thee a song in thy praise;  
 My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
 Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

Thou stock dove whose echo resounds through the glen,  
 Ye wild whistling blackbirds in yon thorny den,  
 Thou green crested lapwing thy screaming forbear,  
 I charge you, disturb not my slumbering fair.

How lofty, sweet Afton, thy neighbouring hills,  
 Far marked with the course of clear winding rills:  
 There daily I wander as noon rises high,  
 My flocks and my Mary's sweet cot in my eye.

How pleasant thy banks and green valleys below,  
 Where wild in the woodlands the primroses blow;  
 There oft as mild evening weeps over the lea,  
 The sweet scented birk shades my Mary and me.

Thy crystal stream, Afton, how lovely it glides,  
 And winds by the cot where my Mary resides;  
 How wanton thy waters her snowy feet lave,  
 As gathering sweet flowerets she stems thy clear wave.

Flow gently, sweet Afton, among thy green braes,  
 Flow gently, sweet river, the theme of my lays;  
 My Mary's asleep by thy murmuring stream,  
 Flow gently, sweet Afton, disturb not her dream.

### THE BANKS OF THE DEVON.

TUNE — *The Pretty Milkmaid.*

Addressed to Miss Charlotte Hamilton in 1787.

How pleasant the banks of the clear winding Devon,  
 With green spreading bushes, and flowers blooming  
 fair!

But the bonniest flower on the banks of the Devon,  
 Was once a sweet bud on the braes of the Ayr.  
 Mild be the sun on this 'sweet blushing flower,  
 In the gay rosy morn, as it bathes in the dew;  
 And gentle the fall of the soft vernal shower,  
 That steals on the evening each leaf to renew

Oh, spare the dear blossom, ye orient breezes,  
 With chill hoary wing, as ye usher the dawn;  
 And far be thou distant, thou reptile that seizes  
 The verdure and pride of the garden and lawn!

Let Bourbon exult in his gay gilded Lilies,  
 And England, triumphant, display her proud Rose:  
 A fairer than either adorns the green vallies,  
 Where Devon, sweet Devon, meandering flows.

## I LOVE MY JEAN.

“This song I composed out of compliment to Mrs. Burns. N.B. It was in the honeymoon.” Spring, 1788.

quarters. OF a' the airts the wind can blaw,  
 I dearly like the west,  
 For there the bonnie lassie lives,  
 The lassie I lo'e best:  
 There wild woods grow, and rivers row,  
 And mony a hill between;  
 But day and night my fancy's flight  
 Is ever wi' my Jean.

I see her in the dewy flowers,  
 I see her sweet and fair,  
 I hear her in the tunefu' birds,  
 I hear her charm the air:  
 There's not a bonnie flower that springs  
 wood. By fountain, shaw, or green,  
 There's not a bonnie bird that sings,  
 But minds me o' my Jean.

## AULD LANG SYNE.

“Is not the Scotch phrase, ‘Auld Lang Syne,’ exceedingly expressive?” — BURNS. Written, perhaps, in 1788, but published in Johnson’s Museum, 1796.

SHOULD auld acquaintance be forgot  
 And never brought to mind?  
 Should auld acquaintance be forgot,  
 And days o’ lang syne.

## CHORUS.

For auld lang syne, my dear,  
 For auld lang syne,  
 We’ll tak a cup o’ kindness yet,  
 For auld lang syne.

We twa hae run about the braes, slopes.  
 And pu’d the gowans fine; daisies.  
 But we’ve wandered mony a weary foot,  
 Sin auld lang syne.

We twa hae paidl’t i’ the burn, brook.  
 Frae mornin’ sun till dine;  
 But seas between us braid hae roar’d,  
 Sin auld lang syne.

And here’s a hand, my trusty fiere, companion,  
 And gie’s a hand o’ thine;  
 And we’ll tak a right guid willie-waught, hearty-pull.  
 For auld lang syne.

And surely ye’ll be your pint stoup, flagon.  
 And surely I’ll be mine;  
 And we’ll tak a cup o’ kindness yet,  
 For auld lang syne.

## ON A WOUNDED HARE.

The young man Thomson, whom the poet here execrates, told Cunningham that "Burns was in great wrath, and cursed me and said little hindered him from throwing me into the Nith." Written in May, 1789.

INHUMAN man ! curse on thy barb'rous art,  
 And blasted be thy murder-aiming eye ;  
 May never pity soothe thee with a sigh  
 Nor ever pleasure glad thy cruel heart.

Go live, poor wanderer of the wood and field !  
 The bitter little that of life remains ;  
 No more the thickening brakes and verdant plains  
 To thee a home, or food, or pastime yield.

Seek, mangled wretch, some place of wonted rest.  
 No more of rest, but now thy dying bed !  
 The sheltering rushes whistling o'er thy head,  
 The cold earth with thy bloody bosom prest.

Oft as by winding Nith, I, musing, wait  
 The sober eve, or hail the cheerful dawn ;  
 I'll miss thee sporting o'er the dewy lawn,  
 And curse the ruffian's aim, and mourn thy hapless fate.

Compare with his other poems showing sympathy with animal life.

## WILLIE BREWED A PECK O' MAUT.

“This air is [Allan] Masterton's, the song, mine. The occasion of it was this: Mr. William Nicol of the High School, Edinburgh, during the autumn vacation being at Moffat, honest Allan — who was at that time on a visit to Dalswinton — and I went to pay Nicol a visit. We had such a joyous meeting that Mr. Masterton and I agreed, each in our own way, that we would celebrate the business.” Autumn, 1789.

## I.

Oh, Willie brewed a peck o' maut,	malt.
And Rob and Allan cam to pree :	taste.
Three blither hearts that lee-lang night	live-long.
Ye wad na find in Christendie.	
We are nae fou', we're no that fou',	
But just a drappie in our e'e ;	drop.
The cock may craw, the day may daw,	
And aye we'll taste the barley bree.	juice.

## II.

Here are we met, three merry boys,  
 Three merry boys, I trow are we ;  
 And mony a night we've merry been,  
 And mony may we hope to be !

## III.

It is the moon — I ken her horn,	
That's blinking in the lift sae hie ;	sky.
She shines sae bright to wyle us hame,	entice.
But, by my sooth, she'll wait a wee !	

## IV.

Wha first shall rise to gang awa',  
 A cuckold, coward loon is he !  
 Wha last beside his chair shall fa',  
 He is the king amang us three !

We are nae fou, we're no that fou,  
 But just a drappie in our e'e;  
 The cock may craw, the day may daw,  
 And aye we'll taste the barley bree.

This Bacchanalian song is among the best of a class to which Burns contributed not infrequently.

## TO MARY IN HEAVEN.

TUNE — *Death of Captain Cook.*

Written in October, 1789, on the day before the anniversary of the death of Mary Campbell. Compare "Flow Gently, Sweet Afton," "Highland Mary," etc.

"As twilight deepened Burns grew 'very sad about something,' and wandered out into the barnyard where, notwithstanding the frost, he strode up and down, watching the clear starry sky. Mrs. Burns at last found him stretched on a mass of straw with his eyes on a beautiful planet 'that shone like another moon.' Prevailed upon to enter the house, he called for his desk and wrote as from memory these verses." — Mrs. Burns's account.

THOU ling'ring star, with less'ning ray,  
 That lov'st to greet the early morn,  
 Again thou usher'st in the day  
 My Mary from my soul was torn.  
 Oh Mary! dear departed shade!  
 Where is thy place of blissful rest?  
 See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?  
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

That sacred hour can I forget,  
 Can I forget the hallowed grove,  
 Where by the winding Ayr we met,  
 To live one day of parting love!

Eternity will not efface  
 Those records dear of transports past;  
 Thy image at our last embrace,  
 Ah! little thought we 'twas our last!

Ayr, gurgling, kiss'd his pebbled shore,  
 O'erhung with wild woods, thick'ning green;  
 The fragrant birch, and hawthorn hoar,  
 Twin'd am'rous round the raptur'd scene;  
 The flow'rs sprang wanton to be prest,  
 The birds sang love on every spray —  
 Till too, too soon, the glowing west  
 Proclaim'd the speed of winged day.

Still o'er these scenes my mem'ry wakes,  
 And fondly broods with miser care!  
 Time but th' impression stronger makes,  
 As streams their channels deeper wear,  
 My Mary, dear departed shade!  
 Where is thy place of blissful rest?  
 See'st thou thy lover lowly laid?  
 Hear'st thou the groans that rend his breast?

One of a series of beautiful tributes to the sweetest, saddest, and best remembered of Burns's loves.

### JOHN ANDERSON.

TUNE — *John Anderson, my Jo.*

Written probably in 1790.

JOHN ANDERSON my jo, John,	love,
When we were first acquent,	sweetheart.
Your locks were like the raven,	
Your bonnie brow was brent;	smooth.



head. But now your brow is beld, John,  
Your locks are like the snaw ;  
But blessings on your frosty pow,  
John Anderson my jo.

pleasant. John Anderson my jo, John,  
We clamb the hill thegither,  
And mony a canty day, John,  
We've had wi' ane anither :  
Now we maun totter down, John,  
But hand in hand we'll go,  
And sleep thegither at the foot,  
John Anderson my jo.

Where in all the realm of poetry is there a prettier piece of conjugal sentiment in life's evening ?

## TAM O' SHANTER.

## A TALE.

“Of brownyis and of bogilies full is this buke.”

— GAWIN DOUGLAS.

This “inimitable tale” was written in one day in October, 1790. It was composed for Captain Grose, who in exchange was to make for Burns a drawing of Alloway Kirk.

peddler fellows. thirsty.	WHEN chapman billies leave the street, And drouthy neibors, neibors meet, As market-days are wearing late,
road. drinking, ale. full.	And folk begin to tak the gate ; While we sit bousing at the nappy, And gettin' fou and unco happy,

We think na on the lang <sup>1</sup> Scots miles,  
 The mosses, waters, slaps, an' stiles,  
 That lie between us and our hame,  
 Where sits our sulky sullen dame,  
 Gathering her brows like gathering storm,  
 Nursing her wrath to keep it warm.

fence-  
 opening.

This truth fand honest *Tam o' Shanter*,<sup>2</sup>  
 As he frae Ayr, ae night did canter,  
 Auld Ayr, wham ne'er a town surpasses,  
 For honest men and bonny lasses.

O Tam ! hadst thou but been sae wise,  
 As ta'en thy ain wife Kate's <sup>3</sup> advice !  
 She tauld thee weel thou wast a skellum,  
 A bletherin, blusterin, drunken blemum ;  
 That frae November till October,  
 Ae market-day thou wast nae sober,  
 That ilka melder, wi' the miller,  
 Thou sat as lang as thou had siller ;  
 That ev'ry naig was ca'd a shoe on,  
 The smith and thee gat roaring fou on,  
 That at the Lord's house, ev'n on Sunday,  
 Thou drank wi' Kirkton <sup>4</sup> Jean till Monday.  
 She prophesied, that late or soon,  
 Thou would be found deep drown'd in *Doon* ;  
 Or catch'd wi' warlocks in the mirk,  
 By Alloway's auld haunted kirk.

a worthless  
 fellow.  
 jabbering,  
 prattler.

turn (i.e.  
 load to be  
 ground).  
 nag, driven.

wizard,  
 dark.

<sup>1</sup> The Scotch mile was longer by several hundred yards than the English.

<sup>2</sup> The original of *Tam o' Shanter*, according to Chambers, was an honest farmer named Douglas Graham, who lived at Shanter.

<sup>3</sup> Graham's wife, not Kate, but Helen McTaggart, "was much addicted to superstitious beliefs."

<sup>4</sup> Jean Kennedy kept a public house in Kirkoswald, a town where a kirk was situated, and hence Kirk-ton.

makes,  
weep.

Ah, gentle dames! it gars me greet,  
To think how mony counsels sweet,  
How mony lengthened, sage advices,  
The husband frae the wife despises!

fireplace.  
foaming  
new ale.

But to our tale: — Ae market night  
Tam had got planted unco right;  
Fast by an ingle, bleezing finely,  
Wi' reaming swats, that drank divinely;  
And at his elbow, Souter Johnnie,<sup>1</sup>  
His ancient, trusty, drouthy crony.

roar.

Tam lo'ed him like a vera brither;  
They had been fou for weeks thegither.  
The night drave on with sangs and clatter:  
And aye the ale was growing better:  
The landlady and Tam grew gracious,  
Wi' favors secret, sweet, and precious:  
The souter tauld his queerest stories;  
The landlord's laugh was ready chorus:  
The storm without might rair and rustle,  
Tam did na mind the storm a whistle.

loads.

Care, mad to see a man sae happy,  
E'en drowned himself amang the nappy!  
As bees flee hame wi' lades o' treasure,  
The minutes winged their way wi' pleasure:  
Kings may be blest, but Tam was glorious,  
O'er a' the ills o' life victorious!

But pleasures are like poppies spread,  
You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed;  
Or like the snow-fall in the river,  
A moment white — then melts forever;

<sup>1</sup> Souter Johnnie, *i.e.* Cobbler Johnnie, was John Davidson, a friend of Graham.

Or like the borealis race,  
That flit ere you can point their place ;  
Or like the rainbow's lovely form  
Evanishing amid the storm.

Nae man can tether time nor tide ; tie.  
The hour approaches, Tam maun ride ;  
That hour o' night's black arch the key-stane,  
That dreary hour he mounts his beast in ;  
And sic a night he taks the road in,  
As ne'er poor sinner was abroad in.

The wind blew as 'twad blawn its last ; blow.  
The rattling showers rose on the blast ;  
The speedy gleams the darkness swallowed ;  
Loud, deep, and lang the thunder bellowed :  
That night a child might understand,  
The Deil had business on his hand.

Weel mounted on his grey mare, Meg,  
A better never lifted leg,  
Tam skelpit on thro' dub and mire, rode fast,  
puddle.  
Despising wind, and rain, and fire ;  
Whiles holding fast his guid blue bonnet,  
Whiles crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet ;  
Whiles glow'ring round wi prudent cares,  
Lest bogles catch him unawares. hobgoblins.  
Kirk-Alloway was drawing nigh,  
Where ghaists and owlets nightly cry.

By this time he was cross the ford,  
Where in the snaw the chapman smoor'd ; smothered.  
And past the birks and meikle stane, birches,  
large.  
Where drunken Charlie brak's neck bane ; bushes,  
heap of  
stone.  
And thro' the whins, and by the cairn,  
Where hunters fand the murder'd bairn ; child.

blaze.  
 cranny.

And near the thorn, aboon the well,  
 Where Mungo's mither hang'd hersel,  
 Before him Doon pours all his floods;  
 The doubling storm roars thro' the woods;  
 The lightnings flash from pole to pole,  
 Near and more near the thunders roll;  
 When glimmering thro' the groaning trees,  
 Kirk-Alloway seem'd in a bleeze;  
 Thro' ilka bore the beams were glancing,  
 And loud resounded mirth and dancing.

twopenny-  
 ale.  
 whisky.

a small  
 coin.  
 sore.

strange.

brand.

window,  
 ledge.

dog.

made them  
 scream.  
 tremble.

Inspiring bold John Barleycorn!  
 What dangers thou can'st make us scorn!  
 Wi' tippenny, we fear nae evil;  
 Wi' usquebae we'll face the devil! —  
 The swats sae ream'd in Tammie's noddle,  
 Fair play, he car'd nae deil a boddle.  
 But Maggie stood right sair astonish'd,  
 Till, by the heel and hand admonish'd,  
 She ventur'd forward on the light;  
 And, wow! Tam saw an unco sight!  
 Warlocks and witches in a dance;  
 Nae cotillon brent new frae France,  
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys,<sup>1</sup> and reels,  
 Put life and mettle in their heels:  
 A winnock-bunker in the east,  
 There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;  
 A towzie tyke, black, grim and large,  
 To gie them music was his charge;  
 He screw'd the pipes and gart them skirl,  
 Till roof and rafters a' did dirl.  
 Coffins stood round like open presses,  
 That shaw'd the dead in their last dresses;

<sup>1</sup> A dance invented in Strathspey.

And by some devilish cantrip slight spell.  
 Each in its cauld hand held a light —  
 By which heroic Tam was able  
 To note upon the haly table,  
 A murderer's banes in gibbet airns; irons.  
 Twa span-lang, wee unchristen'd bairns;  
 A thief, new-cuttet frae a rape,  
 Wi' his last gasp his gab did gape; mouth.  
 Five tomahawks, wi' bluid red-rusted;  
 Five scimitars, wi' murder crusted;  
 A garter, which a babe had strangled,  
 A knife, a father's throat had mangled,  
 Whom his ain son o' life bereft,  
 The grey hairs yet stack to the heft:  
 Wi' mair o' horrible and awfu',  
 Which ev'n to name wad be unlawfu'.

As Tammie glowr'd, amaz'd and curious,  
 The mirth and fun grew fast and furious  
 The piper loud and louder blew;  
 The dancers quick and quicker flew;  
 They reel'd, they set, they cross'd, they cleekit, caught  
arms.  
 Till ilka carline swat and reekit, stout old  
woman,  
sweat,  
reeked.  
 And coost her duddies to the wark, rags, duds.  
shift.  
 And linket at it in her sark;  
 Now Tam, O Tam! had thae been queans, young  
women.  
 A' plump and strapping in their teens!  
 Their sarks, instead o' creeshie flainen, greasy  
flannel.  
 Been snaw-white seventeen-hunder<sup>1</sup> linen! —  
 Thir breeks o' mine, my only pair, these  
breeches.  
 That ance were plush, o' guid blue hair,  
 I wad hae gi'en them off my hurdies, hips.  
 For ae blink o' the bonnie burdies! birdies,  
lasses.

<sup>1</sup> Very fine linen. The number has to do with threads, not with a date.

- withered.      But wither'd beldams, auld and droll  
 wean.            Rigwoodie hags wad spean a foal,  
 jumping,        Louping and flinging on a cummock,  
 staff.            I wonder did na turn thy stomach.
- finely, well.    But Tam kennt what was what fu' brawlie ;  
 strapping.      There was ae winsome wench and waulie,  
 party.            That night enlisted in the core,  
                     Lang after ken'd on Carrick <sup>1</sup> shore ;  
                     (For mony a beast to dead she shot,  
                     And perish'd mony a bonnie boat,  
 barley.            And shook baith meikle corn and bear,  
                     And kept the country side in fear) ;  
 short skirt.     Her cutty-sark o' Paisley <sup>2</sup> harn,  
 coarse linen.    That while a lassie she had worn,  
                     In longitude tho' sorely scanty,  
 proud.            It was her best, and she was vauntie.  
                     Ah! little ken'd thy reverend grannie,  
 bought.            That sark she coft for her wee Nannie,  
                     Wi' twa pund Scots ('twas a' her riches),  
                     Wad ever grace a dance o' witches !
- cover.            But here my Muse her wing maun cour ;  
                     Sic flights are far beyond her power ;  
 leaped.            To sing how Nannie lap and flang,  
                     (A souple jade she was and strang),  
                     And how Tam stood like ane bewitched,  
                     And thought his very een enriched ;  
 fidgeted.        Even Satan glowered, and fidgeted fu' fain,  
 shook.            And hotched and blew wi' might and main :  
                     Till first ae caper, syne anither,  
 lost.              Tam tint his reason a' thegither,

<sup>1</sup> It was here that the poet first heard of Graham's story, which formed the basis of this tale.

<sup>2</sup> Noted for its linen.

And roars out, "Weel done, Cutty-Sark!"  
 And in an instant all was dark;  
 And scarcely had he Maggie rallied,  
 When out the hellish legion sallied.

As bees bizz out wi' angry fyke, buzz, bustle.  
 When plundering herds assail their byke; hive.  
 As open pussie's mortal foes,  
 When, pop! she starts before their nose;  
 As eager runs the market-crowd,  
 When "Catch the thief!" resounds aloud;  
 So Maggie runs, the witches follow,  
 Wi' mony an eldritch screech and halloo. ghastly.

Ah, Tam! ah, Tam! thou'll get thy fairin! present, due.  
 In hell they'll roast thee like a herrin!  
 In vain thy Kate awaits thy comin!  
 Kate soon will be a woefu' woman!  
 Now, do thy speedy utmost, Meg,  
 And win the key-stane of the brig!  
 There at them thou thy tail may toss:  
 A running stream they dare na cross.  
 But ere the key-stane she could make,  
 The fient a tail she had to shake! devil.  
 For Nannie, far before the rest,  
 Hard upon noble Maggie prest,  
 And flew at Tam with furious ettle; aim.  
 But little wist she Maggie's mettle,—  
 Ae spring brought off her master hale,  
 But left behind her ain gray tail;  
 The carlin caught her by the rump,  
 And left poor Maggie scarce a stump!

Now, wha this tale o' truth shall read,  
 Ilk man and mother's son, take heed,



Whene'er to drink you are inclined,  
 Or cutty-sarks run in your mind,  
 Think, ye may buy the joys o'er dear :  
 Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare !

## ANALYSIS OF TAM O' SHANTER.

Persons,	{	Tam o' Shanter.	Place : The Road from Ayr by Alloway
		Kate, his wife.	Kirk to the Brig o' Doon.
		Souter Johnnie.	Time : One Market Night in October.
		Nannie Cutty-Sark.	Purpose : The fulfilment of the wife's warning which the hus- band so often despises.
		Meg, the mare.	

## PLAN.

- Introduction : The habit of sitting brewing at the nappy, unmindful of the lang Scotch miles that lie between the inn and hame, between offending husbands and sullen dames.
- Plot 1. Tam and Johnnie linger long over the nappy enjoying their drink, the landlady's favors, and the landlord's laugh.
2. Midnight approaches when Tam must ride out into the violent storm.
  3. Mounted on Meg he rode recklessly through the storm, passed many a place of grewsome association, and comes in sight of Alloway Kirk now all ablaze.
  4. Meg hesitates, but, spurred on by Tam emboldened by John Barleycorn, brings him near enough to see the witches dance under the supervision of old Nick, and to the accompaniment of that shaggy cur's music. In open coffins corpses stood erect holding candles casting a dim light over signs of violence and of murder.
  5. Tam spies Cutty-Sark and in his enthusiasm over her dancing-capers cries, "Well done, Cutty-Sark." [This is the crisis of the story.]
  6. At this darkness fell, Maggie rallies and runs with all her might, the pack of witches in full chase.
  7. After a harrowing chase for the river, Nannie catches Meg's tail just as the faithful mare springs across the middle of the bridge. Meg is minus a tail, but Tam is saved. [Dynamic point.]

Conclusion : Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare.

"I look on Tam o' Shanter as my standard performance in the poetical line." — BURNS.

Well he might, for this tale in plan, meter, movement, incidental details, and happy combination of the uproariously funny with the startlingly creepy is admirable. I heard it recited once by an old gray-bearded, Barleycorn-inspired Scotch peasant in the yard of Alloway Kirk. The impressiveness of the tale is not more vivid to my mind than the mobile expression on the faces of his countrymen who followed his recital with laughter, sighs, silences, and huzzahs.

### AE FOND KISS.

"These exquisitely affecting stanzas contain the essence of a thousand love-tales." — WALTER SCOTT.

Written after his parting (Dec. 16, 1791) with Clarinda (Mrs. McLehose); but this parting had better be considered as suggesting the theme than as calling for the poem.

#### I.

AE fond kiss, and then we sever ; one.  
 Ae farewell, and then forever !  
 Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
 Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee.  
 Who shall say that fortune grieves him  
 While the star of hope she leaves him ?  
 Me, nae cheerfu' twinkle lights me ;  
 Dark despair around benights me.

#### II.

I'll ne'er blame my partial fancy,  
 Naething could resist my Nancy ;  
 But to see her was to love her ;  
 Love but her, and love forever. —  
 Had we never lov'd sae kindly,  
 Had we never lov'd sae blindly,

Never met — or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken hearted.

## III.

Fare thee weel, thou first and fairest!  
Fare thee weel, thou best and dearest!  
Thine be ilka joy and treasure,  
Peace, enjoyment, love, and pleasure!  
Ae fond kiss, and then we sever;  
Ae farewell, alas! forever!  
Deep in heart-wrung tears I'll pledge thee,  
Warring sighs and groans I'll wage thee!

## DUNCAN GRAY.

Written for Thomson's Collection in 1792. Based on an old song in Johnson's Museum.

## I.

DUNCAN GRAY cam here to woo,  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!  
mellow. On blythe yule night when we were fou!  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!  
askant, shy. Maggie coost her head fu' high,  
aloof. Look'd asklent and unco skeigh,  
Gart poor Duncan stand abeigh;  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!

## II.

flattered. Duncan fleech'd, and Duncan pray'd,  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!  
Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig,<sup>1</sup>  
Ha, ha, the wooing o't!

<sup>1</sup> Ailsa Craig, the rocky promontory near Girvan.



## BRUCE TO HIS MEN AT BANNOCKBURN.

TUNE — *Hay tuttie, taitie.*

The air is supposed to have been Bruce's march at Bannockburn. Composed in a burst of enthusiasm during an afternoon walk in September, 1793.

Scots, wha hae wi' Wallace bled,  
Scots, wham Bruce has aften led,  
Welcome to your gory bed,  
Or to victory!

Now's the day and now's the hour:  
See the front o' battle lour;  
See approach proud Edward's power —  
Chains and slavery!

Wha will be a traitor knave?  
Wha can fill a coward's grave?  
Wha sae base as be a slave?  
Let him turn and flee!

Wha, for Scotland's king and law  
Freedom's sword will strongly draw,  
Freeman stand, or freeman fa',  
Let him follow me!

By oppression's woes and pains!  
By your sons in servile chains!  
We will drain our dearest veins,  
But they shall be free!

L. of C.

Lay the proud usurpers low !  
 Tyrants fall in every foe !  
 Liberty's in every blow ! —  
 Let us do or die !

“Independent of my enthusiasm as a Scotchman, I have rarely met with anything in history which interested my feelings as a man equal with the story of Bannockburn. On the one hand, a cruel but able usurper leading on the finest army in Europe to extinguish the last spark of freedom among a greatly daring and injured people ; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding country or to perish with her.” — BURNS, to the Earl of Buchan, January 12, 1794.

### SOMEBODY.

TUNE — *For the sake of Somebody.*

This beautiful lyric, which owes much to its melody, was written in 1794.

MY heart is sair — I dare na tell —  
 My heart is sair for somebody ;  
 I could wake a winter night  
 For the sake of somebody.  
 Oh-ho, for somebody !  
 Oh-hey, for somebody !  
 I could range the world around,  
 For the sake o' somebody !

Ye powers that smile on virtuous love,  
 Oh, sweetly smile on somebody !  
 Frae ilka danger keep him free,  
 And send me safe my somebody.  
 Oh-ho, for somebody !  
 Oh-hey, for somebody !  
 I wad do — what wad I not !  
 For the sake of somebody !

## A RED, RED ROSE.

TUNE — *Graham's Strathspey.*

Written for the fifth volume of Johnson's Museum in 1794.

OH, my luv'e's like a red, red rose  
 That's newly sprung in June :  
 Oh, my luv'e's like the melodie,  
 That's sweetly play'd in tune.  
 As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
 So deep in luv'e am I :  
 And I will luv'e thee still, my dear,  
 Till a' the seas gang dry.

Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,  
 And the rocks melt wi' the sun ;  
 I will luv'e thee still, my dear,  
 While the sands o' life shall run.  
 And fare thee weel, my only luv'e !  
 And fare thee weel a while !  
 And I will come again my luv'e,  
 Tho' it were ten thousand mile.

## FOR A' THAT AND A' THAT.

This poem on the true elements of worth in man, was given to the world on January 1, 1795.

Is there, for honest poverty  
 That hangs his head and a' that ?  
 The coward-slave, we pass him by,  
 We dare be poor for a' that ;

For a' that, and a' that,  
 Our toils obscure, and a' that,  
 The rank is but the guinea's stamp,  
 The man's the gowd for a' that. gold.

What tho' on hamely fare we dine,  
 Wear hoddin gray, and a' that; common.  
 Gie fools their sticks, and knaves their wine;  
 A man's a man for a' that;

For a' that, and a' that,  
 Their tinsel show, and a' that;  
 The honest man, though e'er sae poor,  
 Is king o' men for a' that.

Ye see yon birkie ca'd a lord, upstart.

Wha struts and stares and a' that;  
 Tho' hundreds worship at his word,  
 He's but a coof for a' that; fool.

For a' that, and a' that,  
 His riband, star, and a' that;  
 The man of independent mind,  
 He looks and laughs at a' that.

A prince can mak a belted knight,  
 A marquis, duke, and a' that :  
 But an honest man's aboon his might, above.  
 Guid faith he mauna fa' that.

For a' that, and a' that,  
 Their dignities, and a' that,  
 The pith o' sense, and pride o' worth,  
 Are higher ranks than a' that.

Then let us pray that come it may,  
 As come it will for a' that,  
 That sense and worth o'er a' the earth,  
 May bear the gree, and a' that. supremacy.



For a' that, and a' that,  
 It's coming yet, for a' that,  
 That man to man, the warld o'er,  
 Shall brothers be for a' that.

“The following is on neither subject [love and wine], and consequently is no song, but will be allowed, I think, to be two or three pretty good prose thoughts inverted into rhyme.” — BURNS to THOMSON, January, 1795.

While it is not a song, isn't it good poetry? Matthew Arnold to the contrary. Compare this with his arraignment of aristocracy in his “Epistle to Davie.”

## ESSENTIAL QUALITIES.

## ACCIDENTAL QUALITIES.

Man is gold.	He who hangs his head in shame of honest poverty is a coward slave. Rank is the stamp.
Hameley fare, hoddin gray with honesty may make of the poor man a king.	Silks, wines, tinsel show may belong to fools and knaves.
The man of independence laughs	at the strutting, staring coof called a lord.
Pith of sense and pride of worth are higher than	Man-made knights and dukes.

Therefore let sense and worth be supreme everywhere and let all men be brothers.

## OH, WERT THOU IN THE CAULD BLAST.

Written in 1796, and among the last of his poems. It was composed, according to a family tradition, for Mrs. Riddel, of Woodlee Park, but according to a pretty and plausible story, for Miss Jessie Lewars, his tender and constant nurse during his last illness. She had played for him the air "Lars o' Livistone," and as soon as he had attuned himself to the melody he wrote, in a few minutes, this beautiful song. Its beauty is now enhanced by its setting to Mendelssohn's music.

OH, wert thou in the cauld blast,  
 On yonder lea, on yonder lea,  
 My plaidie to the angry airt,  
 I'd shelter thee, I'd shelter thee:  
 Or did misfortune's bitter storms  
 Around thee blaw, around thee blaw,  
 Thy bield should be my bosom,  
 To share it a', to share it a'.

Or were I in the wildest waste,  
 Sae black and bare, sae black and bare,  
 The desert were a Paradise,  
 If thou wert there, if thou wert there:  
 Or were I monarch o' the globe,  
 Wi' thee to reign, wi' thee to reign,  
 The brightest jewel in my crown  
 Wad be my queen, wad be my queen.

If "For A' That and A' That" was not a song, this preëminently is, and establishes beyond controversy that his song power and his song quality lasted to the end of his fitful career. Compare this poem with "Handsome Nell," and note the widening change from selfish adoration to unselfish protection.

# GLOSSARY OF SCOTCH WORDS IN THE POEMS SELECTED.



## A.

abeigh, *aloof*.  
 aboon, *above*.  
 ae, *one*.  
 agley, *awry*.  
 aiblins, *perhaps*.  
 airns, *irons*.  
 airts, *quarters*.  
 asklent, *askant*.

## B.

ba', *ball*.  
 bairn, *child*.  
 bear, *barley*.  
 beets, *adds fuel*.  
 bell, *bloom*.  
 belyve, *by and by*.  
 ben, *within*.  
 bickerin, *hasty*.  
 bield, *shelter*.  
 bien, *comfortable*.  
 big, *build*.  
 billies, *fellows*.  
 birkie, *clever fellow*,  
*upstart*.  
 birks, *birches*.  
 bizz, *buzz*.  
 blate, *bashful*.  
 blawn, *blow*.  
 bleeze, *blaze*.  
 blellum, *prattler*.  
 bletherin, *jabbering*.  
 blink, *shine*.  
 blythe, *happy*.  
 boddle, *a small coin*.  
 bogles, *hobgoblins*.

bore, *cranny, hole in  
the wall*.  
 bousing, *drinking*.  
 brae, *slope*.  
 brattle, *clatter*.  
 braw, *well-dressed,  
handsome*.  
 brawlie, *finely, well*.  
 bree, *juice*.  
 brent, *smooth*.  
 bunker, *ledge*.  
 burdies, *birdies, lasses*.  
 burn, *brook, water*.  
 but, *without*.  
 byke, *hive*.

## C.

ca', *drive*.  
 caff, *chaff*.  
 cairn, *heap of stones*.  
 cantrip, *charm*.  
 canty, *pleasant*.  
 carline, *stout old  
woman*.  
 certes, *certainly*.  
 chapman, *peddler*.  
 chiel, *fellow*.  
 chumla, *chimney*.  
 cleekit, *caught*.  
 coft, *bought*.  
 coof, *fool*.  
 core, *party*.  
 cour, *cover*.  
 crack, *tell*.  
 cranreuch, *hoarfrost*.  
 creeshie, *greasy*.

crouse, *merry*.  
 cummock, *staff*.  
 cutty, *short*.

## D.

daffin, *folly*.  
 daimen, *occasional*.  
 dight, *winnowed*.  
 dirl, *tremble*.  
 donsie, *unlucky*.  
 dool, *sorrow*.  
 douce, *gentle*.  
 drappie, *drop*.  
 drouthy, *thirsty*.  
 dub, *puddle*.  
 duddies, *duds, rays*.

## E.

eldritch, *ghastly*.  
 ettle, *aim*.  
 eydent, *diligent*.

## F.

fa', *fall, do*.  
 fairin, *present, reward*.  
 fash, *trouble*.  
 faured, *favoured*.  
 feg, *fig*.  
 fidge, *fidget*.  
 fient, *fiend, devil*.  
 fier, *sound*.  
 fiere, *companion*.  
 flainen, *flannel*.  
 flang, *flung*.  
 fleeched, *supplicated*.  
 flichterin', *fluttering*.

foggage, *forage*.  
 fou, *mellow, drunk*.  
 fyke, *bustle*.

## G.

gab, *mouth*.  
 gang, *go*.  
 gar, *make*.  
 gate, *road*.  
 gear, *riches*.  
 glaikit, *idle*.  
 glowrin, *staring*.  
 gowan, *daisy*.  
 gowd, *gold*.  
 grat, *wept*.  
 gree, *supremacy*.  
 greet, *weep*.

## H.

ha', *hall*.  
 haffet, *temple*.  
 hafflins, *half way*.  
 hained, *kept*.  
 hald, *abiding place*.  
 hallan, *partition wall*.  
 happer, *hopper*.  
 harn, *coarse linen*.  
 haud, *hold*.  
 hawkie, *white-faced  
 cow*.  
 het, *heated*.  
 hilch, *hobble*.  
 hing, *hang*.  
 histie, *dry*.  
 hoddin, *common*.  
 hotched, *shook*.  
 hotch'd, *topsy-turvy*.  
 hurdies, *hips*.

## I.

icker, *ear of corn*.  
 idea, *image*.  
 ingle, *fireplace*.

## J.

jauk, *dally*.  
 jo, *dear, sweetheart*.

## K.

kebbuck, *cheese*.  
 keek, *look through*.  
 kennin, *little*.  
 kiaugh, *anxiety*.

## L.

lades, *loads*.  
 lap, *leaped*.  
 lathefu, *hesitating*.  
 lave, *rest*.  
 lear, *learning*.  
 lee-lang, *live-long*.  
 lift, *sky*.  
 linn, *waterfall*.  
 lint, *flax*.  
 lowe, *flame*.  
 lug, *ear*.  
 lyart, *mixed gray*.

## M.

maut, *malt*.  
 meikle, *large*.  
 melder, *turn*.  
 mirk, *dark*.  
 moil, *labor*.  
 muckle, *much*.

## N.

naig, *nag*.  
 nappy, *ale*.  
 niffer, *exchange*.

## P.

pint stoup, *flagon*.  
 poortith, *poverty*.  
 pow, *head*.  
 pree, *taste*.

## Q.

quean, *woman*.

## R.

rair, *roar*.  
 rant, *boast*.  
 reaming, *foaming*.

reck, *heed*.  
 rede, *counsel*.  
 reekit, *recked*.  
 rigwoodie, *withered*.

## S.

sair, *sore*.  
 sark, *shift, skirt*.  
 shaw, *wood*.  
 skeigh, *shy*.  
 skellum, *a good for  
 nothing*.  
 skelpin, *hurrying*.  
 skirl, *scream*.  
 slaps, *fence openings*.  
 sleekit, *sleek*.  
 smoor'd, *smothered*.  
 snell, *sharp*.  
 snool, *submit*.  
 sowth, *try by whist-  
 ling*.  
 spaviet, *having the  
 spavin*.  
 spean, *wean*.  
 spier, *ask*.  
 stacher, *stagger*.  
 stilt, *halt*.  
 stoure, *dust*.  
 swat, *sweat*.  
 swats, *drink, ale*.  
 syne, *since, ago*.

## T.

tent, *mind, mark*.  
 tentie, *attentively*.  
 tether, *tie*.  
 thole, *suffer*.  
 thrave, *twenty-four  
 sheaves*.  
 tint, *lost*.  
 tippenny, *two-penny  
 ale*.  
 train, *course of events*.  
 tyke, *dog*.

## U.

unco, *strange, very.*  
 uncós, *news.*  
 usquebae, *strong drink,*  
*whiskey.*

## V.

vauntie, *proud.*

## W.

wa', *wall.*  
 wair, *expend, use.*  
 wale, *choose.*  
 wallop, *quick move-*  
*ment.*  
 warlock, *wizard.*  
 waulie, *strapping.*

weel, *well.*  
 weet, *wet.*  
 whins, *bushes.*  
 whyles, *sometimes.*  
 willie-waught, *hearty-*  
*pull.*  
 winnock, *window.*  
 wyle, *beguile, entice.*



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